

Authorizing medical facility construction funding at a level that is \$157 million above the administration's budget request; and

Providing a cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) for veterans' compensation, pension, and related programs.

H.R. 4110 also includes various enhancements to medical care, pension, insurance, education, and employment provisions in current law.

The COLA will follow the Social Security Administration figure, which is based on the Consumer Price Index.

Final action on H.R. 4110 will provide plenty of time for the VA to implement the COLA by December 1, 1998.

I strongly urge my colleagues to vote for this bill.

I want to express my appreciation to the leadership of the Veterans' Affairs Committee in the other body, Chairman SPECTER and Senator ROCKEFELLER, for reaching agreement on these provisions.

I also want to thank the members of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee for their hard work on all the bills passed by the House this year and their cooperation on reaching these agreements.

We have truly worked in bipartisan fashion for the benefit of veterans.

Mr. Speaker, this is the final piece of legislation the Veterans' Affairs Committee will bring to the floor in the 105th Congress.

I want to tell the Ranking Democratic member of the committee, Mr. EVANS, that his work and cooperation on all these issues, as well as the day to day operation of the committee are truly appreciated.

The House Committee on Veterans' Affairs takes a back seat to none in our bipartisan approach to the very serious business of crafting legislation.

LANE EVANS has steadfastly adhered to that tradition and should be commended by all veterans for his support on their behalf.

His committee staff members have also performed their responsibilities in the highest bipartisan tradition of the committee—and I want to thank every member of the majority and minority staff for their contribution to the committee's work.

#### MEDICARE MEDICAL NUTRITION THERAPY ACT

**HON. JOHN E. ENSIGN**

OF NEVADA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, October 14, 1998*

Mr. ENSIGN. Mr. Speaker, it is rare for any legislation in the House of Representatives to obtain the support of a majority of its members. In fact, fewer than one percent of all bills introduced in the 105th Congress have reached this status. I would like to announce with pride that a bill I sponsored, H.R. 1375, The Medical Nutrition Therapy Act, has achieved this remarkable level of support.

Over 220 of our colleagues support this measure because they recognize that the absence of coverage for nutrition therapy services is a glaring omission in current Medicare policy. Medical science makes clear that properly nourished patients are better able to resist disease and recover from illnesses than those who are malnourished. We also know that el-

derly Americans are at a higher risk of malnutrition than others in society due to the naturally occurring aging process.

Despite this knowledge, Medicare does not cover nutrition assessment and counseling services by registered dietitians—what is commonly known in the health care field as medical nutrition therapy (MNT). As a result, the elderly either pay for this service out of their own pockets, or go without. This is not a choice that those on fixed incomes should have to make. Medical nutrition therapy is medically necessary care and ought to be a covered benefit.

I am convinced that this bill is an important part of the solution to saving Medicare. It will help us cut costs without sacrificing the quality of patient care. Empirical evidence shows that MNT is effective for patients with diabetes, heart disease, cancer and other costly diseases that are prominent among the elderly. It lowers treatment costs by reducing and shortening the length of hospital stays, preventing health care complications and decreasing the need for medications. Yet still, we do not provide seniors coverage for this care.

It should be noted that support for medical nutrition therapy is not confined to Congress. Major patient advocacy groups including the American Cancer Society, the American Heart Association, the National Kidney Foundation, the American Diabetes Association and the National Osteoporosis Foundation also support coverage for MNT. These groups understand that appropriate nutrition therapy saves money and lives.

Any measure that achieves such an impressive level of political support is deserving of serious deliberation in this body. While I regret that this bill will not be taken up in the remaining days of this Congress, I urge the leadership of both parties to make this bill a top priority next year. While the Balanced Budget Act helped strengthen the Medicare program in the short term, additional reforms will be necessary to prepare the program for the coming retirement of the Baby Boom generation. Congress will be remiss if it overlooks medical nutrition therapy as part of those long-term reforms.

In closing, I want to thank the American Dietetic Association and the Nevada Dietetic Association for their fine work in helping me educate members of Congress about this important measure. The dedicated health and nutrition professionals represented by those groups can be proud of how far this bill has advanced in the 105th Congress and confident that we will ultimately succeed in these efforts.

#### DANTE B. FASCELL NORTH-SOUTH CENTER ACT OF 1991

SPEECH OF

**HON. HOWARD L. BERMAN**

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Monday, October 12, 1998*

Mr. BERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased that the House yesterday passed H.R. 4757 to rename the North-South Center in Miami after former House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Dante B. Fascell. I am proud to have cosponsored the bill, and I commend International Relations Committee Chairman BEN GILMAN and Ranking Member LEE HAMILTON for their leadership in introducing it.

I had the great pleasure of working with Dante on what was then known as the House Foreign Affairs Committee. He richly deserves the honor of having the North-South Center renamed after him. As the Committee's senior expert on Latin America, Dante Fascell contributed substantially to U.S. policy toward the region even before becoming chairman in 1983. A stern opponent of Cuba's Communist regime, Dante was a driving force behind the establishment of Radio Marti in 1982. He promoted democracy throughout Latin America and the world.

I remember his years as chairman with deep respect and fondness. Watching Chairman Fascell officiate over foreign affairs legislation was the political equivalent of watching a great maestro conduct a fine orchestra. During his tenure as chairman, Dante frequently bridged the Committee's deep ideological divisions by working out compromises. He tried to strengthen the Committee's voice in foreign policy by defending its prerogatives on foreign aid authorizations. He also fought for Congress's overall role in making foreign policy. In 1987, Dante served as vice chairman of the special committee that investigated executive branch conduct in the Iran-Contra scandal.

Dante Fascell helped establish the North-South Center, an independent research and educational organization that produces policy-relevant studies on such critical issues as democracy, trade, sustainable development and the persistent gap between the rich and the poor. Formally associating Dante's name with the Center is especially appropriate because of their shared emphasis on the Western Hemisphere. Renaming the Center after him is fitting recognition of his many years of hard work in foreign affairs. We all miss his presence and wish him well in his retirement in his beloved Florida.

#### WHEN SHALL THE BELLS OF BALANGIGA TOLL ANEW?

**HON. ROBERT A. UNDERWOOD**

OF GUAM

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, October 14, 1998*

Mr. UNDERWOOD. Mr. Speaker, I have stood many times before this body to advocate the return of at least one of the Bells of Balangiga to its rightful owners, the people of Samar in the Philippines. To this effect, I introduced House Resolution 312, calling on the transfer of the one of the bells from F.E. Warren Air Force Base. Today, I am proud to transmit to this body the remarks of Congressman Marcelino "Nonoy" C. Libanan, a distinguished colleague from the Republic of the Philippines House of Representatives. Congressman Libanan represents the Lone District in Eastern Samar.

#### WHEN SHALL THE BELLS OF BALANGIGA TOLL ANEW?

(By Hon. Marcelino C. Libanan)

I rise on a matter of personal and collective privilege.

Mr. Speaker, many have tried and just as many have failed. But this will not stop this representation from singing in a louder tune that very same refrain for the return of the Bells of Balangiga to where they belong; to the belfry of Balangiga Church, to the faithful of our Christian community; and, to the heart of every Samareno.